ISSN: 3079-3319

Falcons Journal of Advanced Research

Volume: 03, Issue: (01), Article ID: FJAR-VOL3-01-25002A

Industrialization and Class Struggle in Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*: Literature as Social Critique

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Abstract

Industrial capitalism produced not only new machines and urban forms, but also new ways of classifying, disciplining, and imagining human beings. This article examines Hard Times as a concentrated literary critique of industrialization, focusing on how the novel renders class struggle legible through spatial design, utilitarian pedagogy, linguistic dehumanization, and narrative form. Building on Marxist literary criticism and cultural materialist assumptions about literature's entanglement with social production, the analysis argues that Hard Times dramatizes class antagonism by linking economic rationalization to the transformation of persons into measurable, substitutable labor power. The study's central claim is that Dickens constructs a proto theory of class struggle by depicting ideology (especially utilitarianism and political economy) as a practical force shaping institutions, subjectivities, and relations between owners and workers. Close reading demonstrates that the industrial city operates as a symbolic machine that standardizes time, space, and feeling, while the educational regime of "Facts" functions as ideological training aligned with capitalist calculation. The working-class figure is shown both as socially erased through the label "Hands" and ethically intensified through narrative attention to suffering, endurance, and constrained agency. The article concludes that Hard Times remains relevant because it anticipates modern tensions around quantitative governance, organizational discipline, and the reduction of persons to data or function, and because it clarifies how narrative form itself can become a mode of social critique.

Keywords: *industrialization, class struggle, Marxist criticism, cultural materialism, utilitarianism, Coketown, Victorian capitalism, Dickensian social critique*

Received: ***October 04, 2025*** *Accepted:* ***December30, 2025***

How to Cite this Paper: Afzal, M. (2025). Industrialization and class struggle in *Hard Times*: Literature as social critique. *Falcons Journal of Advanced Research, 3*(1), 15-24. https://doi.org/10.63287/690432

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FJAR Falcons Journal of Advanced Research
ISSN: 3079-3319
Volume: 3,
Issue:(01)
Nov 25 - Jan, 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century saw a revolution in the way we work and live that swiftly concentrated hubs of labor in industrial cities and new sources of wealth and power among factory owners and financial elites. It is read in this respect that *Hard Times* can be a kind of laboratory in literature in which industrialism will be made visible not only as economic change, but also as a reorganization of everyday perception and value. Dickens does not simply "represent" industrial society, the novel imagines a condensing symbolic fiction, Coketown, and a selection of social types through which the contradictions of industrial modernity might be seen and refuted. Scholarship which takes Dickens as a social critic has tended to focus on exposure, sympathy, and reformist intent, but *Hard Times* is also a good candidate for interpretation as a structural account of class antagonism, in which ideology and institution are jointly responsible for causing dehumanization and conflict.

A key assumption of Marxist literary criticism is that literature can help uncover the lived texture of class relations, the ideological processes which develop the naturalization of exploitative relations. In an amenable, cultural materialist register, the literary text is neither severable from its material conditions nor bent on a mirror of them, it is an active cultural practice which organises experience and flows social meanings. Stearns and Burns advocate the value of fiction in making social theory experientially accessible and Dickens's narratives to repeatedly bring underclass life into imaginative focus for making storytelling an association with feeling the social consequences of industrial capitalism.

The problem statement of this article is therefore not whether *Hard Times* critiques industrial society, since that is clearly established, but how its critique works, specifically, how industrialization comes to be transformed into narrative formations that make the struggle between classes legible as a conflict over value, personhood, and institutional power. The analysis takes "class struggle" to mean more than explicit strikes or union politics. It is the struggle found in everyday life around issues of recognition, of whether workers are individual people, or abstract units of labor, of whether children are being taught to imagine or to calculate, of whether social suffering is understood to be systemic or personal. This broad perspective is in line with conflict theory accounts of social relations in which class conflict is taken as fundamental even when it is intersected by other dimensions of social contestation.

The research questions of the study were as follows:

1) How the industrial city in *Hard Times* functions as a symbolic structure for the creation of dehumanization and class polarization.
2) How does utilitarian pedagogy work as an ideological apparatus in bronchial commons with the needs of industrial capitalism?
3) How are alienation and unequal power registered in the way Dickens uses language, for instance by reducing the workers to "Hands"?
4) What narrative and stylistic strategies enable the novel to make the class conflict happen, while still allowing it to be a literary work and not a sociological treatise?

The basic argument continually evolved throughout the article which is that *Hard Times* links industrialization to class struggle through three mutually reproductive mechanisms: Spatial Design (Coketown's standardized environment), Ideological Training (the utilitarian regime of "Facts"), and Representational Form (satire, typology, strategic focalization). Together by these mechanisms a kind of proto class struggle narrative is made: A narrative in which capitalist relations are structurally antagonistic yet the same time dramatizes the kind of ethical and affective injury that capitalist relations do to workers and elites.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Dickens and nineteenth-century industrial society repeatedly must come back to the assertion that his fiction is social critique. Within the scholarship provided, there are several strands that are particularly relevant for interpreting the text of *Hard Times* as an industrial and class text.

A first strand picks up on the importance of the industrial city and working conditions as the novel's defining imaginative environment. Hatice Ozutku and coauthors read *Hard Times* as a critical account of the work life of the industrial revolution and the conceptual underpinnings of industrial era management. This discussion is relevant because *Hard Times* sets explicitly a

clash between value-systems: utilitarian calculation and imaginative, or moral, "higher goods." Treating novels as social critique thus involves attention to the position that the text gives to reading itself as a moral and political activity.

Similarly, Megan Ward shows how perspectives of Victorian realist characters based on systems, predictability, and formal mechanisms can be elicited from models that do not focus on interior depth. This argument provides support for a formal argument centrally made in *Hard Times*: that Dickens's use of typological (and sometimes, "flat") characterization might prove not an artistic weakness but rather a representational strategy in keeping with the novel's critique of mechanization and standardization.

Finally, Adyar Saadi Khudhur foregrounds the workers financial, social as well as legal conditions in *Hard Times*, reinforcing the novel's concern with law, industrial space and class hierarchy. Even where this work is descriptive, it underscores an important point: class struggle in the novel is mediated by institutions, including legal frameworks which constrain life options for workers.

Taken together, the reviewed scholarship supports four conclusions that are motivating in the present study. First, Coketown is a condensed semiotic model of industrial modernity. Second, utilitarianism in the novel is not just a concept but an institutional practice of educational, governing, and social processes. Third, class conflict is enacted in both overt and subtle ways using such tools as language, law, and moral coding. Fourth, narrative form is part of and is not separate from the critique. The present article builds on these premises while contributing a more integrated account of the process of industrialization, ideology and narrative strategies working in concert in the generation of a proto class struggle narrative in *Hard Times*.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical approach was a combination of Marxist literary criticism and a cultural materialist approach to socially embedded form in literature. The purpose of the framework was not to force *Hard Times* into a predetermined doctrine, but to offer up concepts that help in understanding how the novel represents industrial capitalism as a system of relations and meanings.

3.1 Marxist literary criticism and class struggle

Within the framework of Marxist approaches, class struggle is the conflict that is based on conflicting interests between the capital-owners and the labor-power-sellers. The distinctive advantage of Marxist Criticism for a literary study is the focus on how economic relations are cultural "common sense", through tools of ideology, institutions, and everyday practices. Yildirim's conflict theory discussion, while not exclusively Marxist, confirms the importance of class conflict in modern portrayals of social conflict and sees industrial capitalism as one of the major producers of such conflict.

Stearns and Burns account of Dickens and Marxism is useful here because, although taking Dickens's fiction as a medium through which concepts such as class consciousness and social injustice can become emotionally and imaginatively legible. In this view, fiction can act as a socially meaningful way of knowing, a way that can capture the subjective experience and moral contradiction and not reduce them to abstract theory.

3.2 Alienation as representational problem

One of the foundational concerns of Marxism is the alienation of labour under capitalism: the alienation of workers from control over their work, products and social relations, and this is often coupled with the reduction of people to function. In *Hard Times*, this diminution presents itself as a problem of representation, how to represent workers in a society whose attitude towards them is already that of interchangeable parts. The critical question is thus one of the language and narrative forms of the novel, namely how this language and form reproduce or resist this dissolution of the workers into abstract labor units. Ozutku and coauthors make a point of noting that workers are called "hands" and their discussion highlights the reduction of human beings to partial bodies as a key marker of industrial era management mentality.

3.3 Ideology and utilitarian rationality

Utilitarianism and political economy are not found in the novel appearing as neutral intellectual movements but institutionalized or as institutional rationalities. Yildirim's discussion connects utilitarian logic to the reform legislation and claims that those who opposed it associated utilitarian government with the "mechanization of human

life." This aids in conceptualizing utilitarianism as an ideological formation that authorizes the process of reducing human complexity to calculable "facts" by bringing moral worth into alignment with economic rationality.

3.4 Cultural materialism and the authority of reading

Cultural materialism stresses the fact that cultural texts are transmitted in institutions and value systems. Leypoldt's theory of evaluative frameworks offers a conceptual ground for an analyse of how reading can be caught in between purpose-rational consumption and moral or civil "higher goods". This is directly relevant to the fact that *Hard Times* thematizes an institutional attempt to restrict value to measurable facts while the narrative itself encourages the reader to think about imagination and affect as socially necessary.

3.5 Formal mediation and the system character

Ward's description of Victorian character as potentially systemic rather than exclusively internal helps to make a formal claim that is critical to Dickens's social critique. If industrial modernity organizes people into systems, then literary characters may be created to reveal effects of the system, for example, predictability, feedback loop, social scripting. This enables a reading of Dickens's typological figures, such as the factory owner and the utilitarian educator, in terms of nodes that have been deliberately constructed in a social machine rather than individuals rounded psychologically as in the tradition of realism.

4. METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using qualitative textual analysis based on close reading approach with Marxist literary criticism and cultural materialism. The main part of the corpus was the extracts of *Hard Times*, as reproduced and analysed in the offered scholarship, especially in those parts in which the descriptions of the novel concerning Coketown, education and labour relations were quoted verbatim. The method puts an emphasis on the interpretation of diction, metaphor, spatial description and narrative voice as socially meaningful form rather than as pure aesthetic decoration.

The four methodological steps in the analysis were as follows. First, passages were chosen that state aspects of industrial modernity directly, through sensory imagery, spatial repetition and through the language of machinery. Key instances where the portrayal of smoke of Coketown, canals and the standardisation of the streets, the portrayal of the factory system through rhythmic monotony and metonymy.

Second, passages were grouped by analytical category that was developed from the theoretical framework: industrial space, utilitarian ideology, dehumanizing language, class antagonism, alienation, and narrative strategy. This coding was interpretive, rather than statistical. The purpose was to detect how the continuously reappearing motifs and institutional representations acted in concert to create a coherent critique of rationality of capitalism.

Third, each of the categories was analyzed by close reading of the connections between textual features and social processes. For example, the repetition of the industrial city was analysed as a formal analogue of the standardisation of factories, while the insistence on "Facts" in the school was analysed as ideological training for calculative government. The language of "Hands" was examined as a symptomatic representation of alienation and as a story mechanism for exposing exploitation in terms of the ways that language itself is involved in dehumanization.

Fourth, triangulation of the interpretive findings was conducted against the scholarly arguments in the sources provided. Ozutku and coauthors were used to substantiate the reading of the novel as a critique of the management mentality of the industrial era. Yildirim was drawn upon to link the conflict theory and utilitarian policy contexts with the themes in the novel. Alzouabi was used to broaden the critique against moral and social "crimes" across class lines. Stearns and Burns went to justify the Marxist direction that addresses Dickensian narrative to render structural conflict intelligible in the popular imagination. Leypoldt and Ward used to have further analysis of reading authority and formal strategies.

Because the study was limited to interpretive depth and not exhaustively reconstruction of history, historical claims were restricted to those which could be proven by the sources provided, and most so where they related the novel to industrial disputes, utilitarian reforms and the development of Victorian institutions.

5. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Coketown as industrial space and symbolic machine

The novel's industrial city is more than just a backdrop. It is a symbolic machine which makes industrial capitalism visible as sensory and spatial form. In one of the most frequently cited descriptions Coketown is introduced as "a town of machinery and tall chimneys" and "serpents of smoke" is one of the dominant visual mottoes. (Özutku et al., 2018). The focus on machinery and smoke is not just a sign of pollution. It suggests production without organic resolution continuously, an environment where industrial production becomes the defining principle of the city. In terms of Marxism, the city is seen as a landscape structured by production relations - where the natural rhythms of nature are replaced with the repetitive movement of industrial labour.

Coketown's waterways are described as "a black canal" and a river running "purple" with "ill-smelling dye." (Özutku et al., 2018). Such details link industrial production to sensory degradation, but the more important is conceptual in that nature is revealing of its material alteration by economic process, and the "color" of the world is thus coming to be an index of class society's priorities. The river's unnatural factor in color can be read as a narrative index of mechanisms for externalizing the costs of production on commonly shared environments, and hints towards some of the implications of what could be called "post-industriality" in both political and geographical senses: that industrial prosperity is inseparable from social and ecological damage.

The most insistently described feature of the city is repetition. Coketown "contained several large streets all very like one another," and "every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow." (Özutku et al, 2018). This repetition has at least three important functions.

First, it emulates factory standardisation. If the goal of the factory is to give regularized processes to producing one commodity, so the similar streets in the city, the same logic should apply to social space. Builded environment becomes an extension of industrial rationality This corresponds with the thesis that the factory system presented not only technical, but also social and managerial problems and demanded new modes of direction and organization. (Özutku et al., 2018).

Second, through repetition comes the discipline of time. Meaning "went in and out at the same hours," the association of daily movement with synchronized labor time. The inhabitants of the city are not just living in Coketown, they are locked by it. A cultural materialist reading takes this to be a matter of institutional shaping of subjectivity: the forms of the city provide an organization of not only bodies, but expectations of what life is for, i.e., work done into a stiff schedule.

Third, repetition is an argument affecting argument. If "every day" is the same as any other day, then aspiration and imagination are structurally limited. The novel's focus on sameness is a polemic against an economic order which limits human possibility by limiting lived time. This connects directly with the condemnation of systems that "suppress the creative imagination" in the novel and the reduction of individuals to mechanical roles. (Özutku et al., 2018).

Machine imagery of the city also comes into the description of industrial sound and motion. The piston of the engine works "monotonously up and down," in comparison to "the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness." (Özutku et al., 2018) The simile gives the sense of motion a grotesque vitality, implicating that the machine world was animated, but, in a distorted form. The "madness" does not belong solely to the elephant; it becomes a metaphor for a society that does not see a distinction between the relentless moving and living. In Marxist terms, however, the machine looks like an external power that dominates the world of the worker, some form of social power materialized as industrial apparatus.

5.2 Utilitarianism as ideology, schooling as institutional reproduction

If Coketown offers the novel a spatial argument, the school offers an ideological argument. Utilitarian education in *Hard Times* is depicted not as an objective of study, but rather as an instrument for the creation of specific types of subjects, trained to prize facts, calculation, and quantifiable results. One of the programmatic claims is that "Facts alone are wanted in life," followed by the imperative: "Plant nothing else, and root out everything else." (Yildirim, 2012)."Plant" and "root out" are crucial words. It conceives of education as cultivation, but not so much of growing things as of getting rid of what can't be enumerated. Utilitarianism is therefore a pedagogy of exclusion.

Yildirim links utilitarian thinking with the arising of reform acts and with the critics who blamed utilitarian policy for the "mechanization of human life." (Yildirim, 2012). In the given context it is easy to understand the insistence on facts of the school that Yildirim describes: It must be read as a political one. The educational model naturalizes a worldview according to which human beings are judged by utility. In terms of the logic of industrial capitalism such evaluation bolsters managerial practices in which the labor is seen, not as human activity embedded in social life, but as a quantifiable input.

Dickens's satire works to intensify the critique by introducing mass produced teachers. The schoolmaster is "turned at the same time, in the same factory," "like so many pianoforte legs." (Yildirim, 2012) Teachers being manufactured like furniture parts makes education a production of a factory. It suggests that the institution is not teaching industrial rationality, but it is industrial rationality at the level of human formation. Under a Marxist glance, the school becomes part of the superstructure of reproduction of capitalist relations, aligning the subjectivity to the needs of production.

The fact regime also influences the relations among family and gender in *Hard Times*, although the present analysis restricts its claims to the ones supported by the provided sources. Alzouabi's reading of the novel as crime narrative makes the argument that utilitarian philosophy allows for manipulation and exploitation in family forms, such as the conniving of marriage for social and economic gain and the subsequent vulnerability of the coerced subject. (Alzouabi, 2021). This supports a much broader claim: utilitarian rationality in the novel is not only educational doctrine but also a logic of decision making that viols people as means to some measurable end.

5.3 Working-class representation and the politics of naming

A key issue of the industrial society as it is expressed in the novel concerns the worker's view and name. The most famous instance is "Hands" which reduces workers to body parts and functions. Yildirim notes the treatment of the workers as faceless emotionless "Hands" and class conflict relation is the factory owner and this the class conflict relation is embedded in the novel. (Yildirim, 2012). Ozutku and coauthors similarly underscore the fact that workers are "mentioned as 'hands'" because they were not counted as full "personalities." (Özutku et al., 2018).

This reduction in languages is not accidental. It is a representational procedure of alienation. A Marxist reading of the text accords to the term "Hands" its cultural articulation of labor's commodification: that is, labor-power is bought, not the person, and the person is therefore reduced to the functional ability of the hand. This critique of the novel is established when this reduction is revealed as morally and psychologically violent.

The juxtaposition of calculating and interior life in this text serves to bring out this point. The factory can count "so many hundred Hands in this Mill," and "so many hundred horse Steam Power." (Özutku et al., 2018) Here, the parallel structure is used to equate human labour with the mechanical. Even without enlarging the quotation, formal pairing is enough to demonstrate how human beings are made use of in industrial accounting like machines. The moral critique stems from the fact that the narrative opens the way to the realization that there is something like such equivalence as a category mistake, a social violence in the form of administrative logic.

Ozymaizu and coauthors also invoke the novel's portrayal of the ideology of capitalism as a moralizing discourse that scapegoats those who are working for the wealthy for causing their poverty. The presentation of a capitalist who 'made sixty thousand pounds out of sixpence' and then wonders why others cannot do the same, is a satirical condensation of individualist ideology. (Özutku et al., 2018). The logic of the statement is not just arrogance. It is a type of class power which turns unequal conditions into individual shortcomings. In Marxist terms this is an ideological inversion, the systemic exploitation is presented as the failure of the exploited to emulate the exploiter.

5.4 Class antagonism as relational structure, not isolated conflict

Class struggle in *Hard Times* is created through relationships rather than through one dramatic confrontation. The class antagonism of the novel is evident in the status divide between factory workers and factory owners, in the ideological construction of the problem of poverty, and in institutional constraints on the lives of the workers. Yildirim makes clear that the relationship between the capitalist owner and the worker is a class conflict and links the novel to industrial disputes such as the Preston Lockout. (Yildirim, 2012). Even if the novel is not built around a strike plot, the social world that it presents is full

of conditions that give meaning to labor conflict: unequal power, economic dependence and institutional coercion.

Alzouabi's crime framework assists the categories of classes by insisting that infringement and harm is done throughout classes. Under this lens, some of the actions of the elite, such as manipulation for "social and economic benefit" become moral crimes that echo the more visible, legal crimes associated with poverty such as theft. (Alzouabi, 2021). This interpretive move is a significant one for class struggle analysis because it rejects the moral asymmetry that is all too often imposed by bourgeois ideology, in which illegality on the part of workers is deplored while elite exploitation is normalized as business. By working with elite manipulation as crime, reading produces discourses of power that are usually left from view by being socialized as harm.

Khudhur's emphasis on the workers' legal conditions makes us emphasize the point that class struggle is mediated through law and rights. The paper emphasizes how *Hard Times* reveals working conditions of workers as structured by oppressive legal and institutional forces such as restrictions on divorce and the distribution of rights. (Khudhur, 2023). From a Marxist lens, this can be argued to support the idea that law in capitalistic society often serves to stabilize the class relations by limiting the legal options of the poor but protecting property and elite privilege.

5.5 Alienation and the mechanization of feeling

Alienation in *Hard Times* is not just economic and emotional, but also perceptual. Yildirim claims that the opponents of utilitarianism and Dickens have made the application of the utilitarian logic to be synonymous with the "mechanization of human life," and is reading utilitarianism in the novel as having mechanizing effects. (Yildirim, 2012). Dickens's critique thus goes beyond wages and working conditions to also touch on the colonization of feeling and moral judgement by industrial logic.

The mechanization of the feeling is implied in the tension between "fact" and "fancy." The educational requirement to provide just the facts suggests that imagination, feeling, and moral intuition are nonproductive. When such a worldview is dominant, human relations run the risk of being reduced to transactions or calculations. Alzouabi in a similar way considers that the novel reflects a "materialistic world" where happiness is sacrificed in order to obey social values that are also in accordance with economic logic. (Alzouabi, 2021). This claim is consistent with Marxist critiques of commodification: as the capitalist value begins to dominate, nonmarket values are marginalized, social bonds relaxed to be contaminated by economic reasoning.

Ward's theoretical intervention about Victorian character provides a very handy formal analogue for this process. Ward argues that realist character has often been defined by interior depth, but other models focus on systems, behaviour and predictability as part of the nature of 'seeming human' (Ward, 2018). This is important to read *Hard Times* because Dickens's use of typological character alongside those aligned with utilitarian and capitalist rationality could be considered a formal strategy for depicting social programming. Characters as result of systems that make them readable but are not limited to being an autonomous interior. In a society in which education and work are structured to create predictable responses to generated questions, the predictability of the character becomes symbolic to industrial modern society's mode of subject formation.

5.6 Narrative strategy and the aesthetics of critique

There is an inseparable link between social critique in the novel and narrative strategy. Dickens creates a great deal of violence in supposedly reasonable ideas by using exaggeration, irony and typology. Whereas a sociological report might set forth statistics, the novel sets forth scenes that dramatize the ways of failure to account for human life in statistics. Ozutku and coauthors draw a parallel to this from the book in the contrast between what can be measured, like steam power, and what cannot be measured like moral capacities. (Özutku et al., 2018). Even when the critical vocabulary is clearly Marxist in flavor, the logic of a narrative follows Marxist concerns: the power of capitalism is its ability to make life measurable; the danger of capitalism is the moral deformation in the process of such quantification.

Leydpolt's description of reading and patterns of evaluation assists in understanding how the novel places its reader. If reading can swing between being a purpose (that of rational consumption) and having excellent moral evaluation, then *Hard Times* tries to bring in the latter. The polemical quality of the novel, and its insistence upon affective recognition, encourage the reader to adopt a

"strong value" attitude which will judge industrial rationality as ethically poor. (Leypoldt, 2020). In terms of cultural materialism, however, this implies that the novel is part of a public moral economy of reading of the novel, not simply as entertainment but as an intervention on debates about reform, value, human dignity.

Alzouabi's interpretation of the novel as rereadable as a crime narrative also exposes a storytelling tactic: To structure social critique by the suspense and moral issues of sin. Crime affords the plot impetus as well as revealing systemic pressures. If the poor rob out of necessity and the elites commit "moral crimes" out of greed for profits or status, then narrative crime becomes a way of looking at the contradiction of class society. (Alzouabi, 2021).

5.7 Proto class struggle narrative and institutional foresight

A proto class struggle narrative does not require a revolutionary program as such. It involves an understanding of the fact that social conflict is structural and that institutions reproduce social conflict. Yildirim thus identifies class divisions specifically as fundamental to the conflict of the time and approaches *Hard Times* as a particularly direct treatment of the social outcomes of industrialization and links the novel to the creation of a "massive working class" as well as a confrontation between factory owners and workers. (Yildirim, 2012). This strengthens the argument that Dickens makes here about industrial capitalism being a system of conflict, despite the foreground of personal stories in the narrative.

The class struggle story of the novel can be clarified by matching three institutional sites: factory, school, and law in the story.

- **Factory:** The reduction of the workers to "Hands" and the accounting equivalence of hands and the steam power shows how the factory system defines people by their productive function. (Özutku et al., 2018).
- **School:** The demand for only facts and the "factory" production of schoolmasters indicate the reproduction of the rationality needed for the industrial production of governance in education. (Yildirim, 2012).

The unequal distribution of rights and law in constraining the personal lives of workers are ways that class hierarchy is stabilized through formal institutions. (Khudhur, 2023; Alzouabi, 2021).

When these sites are read in conjunction with one another, the appearance of class struggles as episodic but not systemic organization.

Conflict theory claims according to Yildirim's study also highlight the fact that class conflict frequently coexists with other conflict dimensionalities too. While the present paper is focused on class, the framework accounts for the fact that Victorian conflict had multiple intersecting concerns. (Yildirim, 2012). The implication for reading *Hard Times* is that class struggle is not separated, that it does not form in a vacuum and cause moral norms and gender expectations, and it does not cause institutional hierarchy despite the novel's class background.

5.8 Contemporary relevance embedded in the novel's critique of quantification and design

Although *Hard Times* is a Victorian novel, the way the novel critiques quantification has implications and applications for the present, as far as organization and related technology. Relevance has nothing to do with arguing that there is a direct historical continuity, it has to do with noting the recurring logic: This is a tendency to govern through measurable outcomes, to value workers as resources, and to emphasize facts more than complex experience in human.

Cunha and coauthors suggest that organizational design affects the ways work is done and authority and control function, in a relevant way formalization involves specifying rules governing ways of doing work and design choices can impose common rhythms upon everyday life. (Cunha et al., 2022). This perspective helps to highlight another reading of *Hard Times*: the standardized streets and synchronized hours of Coketown can be read as a progenitor account in the form of a narrative depicting the life of design organizations, where social space serves the purpose of an organizational chart in built form.

Cunha and coauthors also address Taylorism in the context of "scientific management" and point out that Taylor perceived workers didn't need to think due to the thinking that had already been done for them. (Cunha et al., 2022). This is especially true of the utilitarian educational regime of *Hard Times*, in which the breeding of "Facts" is substituted for independent judgment and imagination. The parallel is not that Dickens was able to predict Taylorism historically in a strict sense, but rather that Dickens spotted

a rationalizing impulse which would find formal expression in management science.

Ward's reasoning that models of human likeness may focus on systems, behavior and predictability is also relevant to contemporary fretting about algorithmic personhood and evaluation based on data. (Ward, 2018). This makes *Hard Times* read readably as a critique of subjects that are treated as outputs of systems and a warning on the moral costs of reducing human life to measurable functions.

Finally, Leypoldt's framework proposes that reading itself is influenced by several different value systems, such as purpose - rational consumption and strong moral evaluation (Leypoldt, 2020). The novel's insistence that imagination and affect matter can therefore be interpreted as a defense of robust evaluative frameworks against purely instrumental rationality, a defense which looks great in the context of institutions and organizations in the public sphere increasingly justifying decisions by reference to metrics rather than based on moral account.

6. CONCLUSION

Hard Times constructs the industrialization and class struggle not on one giant revolutionary plot, but through the integrative design of space, ideology, language, and form. In the analysis of this report, the city of Coketown was found to be the industrial machine reduced to urban form: smoke, dye, canals and standardized streets crammed an industrial modernity into a moral and sensory habitat. The city ow repetition and synchronization of space naturalize factory discipline and presents it as daily life, which demonstrates how industrial capitalism constitutes the standardization of space and time. The utilitarianism in the novel was also revealed to be an ideological apparatus with institutional expression, particularly through schooling, the analysis revealed. The demand for "Facts alone are wanted in life" represents education as the production of calculative subjects, the elimination of those elements which resist measurement. Within this framework the school becomes a place where industrial rationality is reproduced in the form of common sense.

Working-class representation was shown to be controlled by the politics of nomenclature. The label "Hands" involves more than description of their condition as it is an act of linguistic alienation and commodification. When workers can be counted as steam power, the meaning of class society discloses itself, and language itself, as how the class society reduces people to function. The article went on to make the argument that narrative strategy is necessary to Dickens's critique. Satire, typological characters, and emphasis on selected moral issues of particular importance do a critical work of revealing the violence embedded in the socially normalized rationalities. Alzouabi's interpretation based on crimes committed by many characters in the novel helped illuminate the fact that the novel may legitimately approach exploitation and manipulation as crimes that are distributed among classes, making the argument that class struggle implies struggles over legality, legitimacy and moral accountability. The theoretical framework illuminated the way that these textual mechanisms constitute a proto class struggle narrative. The structural production of conflict, and of inequality, is represented as normal, as being produced through institutions such as factory, school and law, rather than being reducible to individual vice. The contemporary relevance of this story is the promise to reenact rationalities that always seek to govern by quantifying, the institutionalization of the human by designing systems that make persons predictable functions of institutional forms, and the systematic treatment of persons as static functions of systems.

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